



Stone Soup

by James Buechler

Puppets and Set by Laurie Stein

Photographed by Tony Thomas

Players

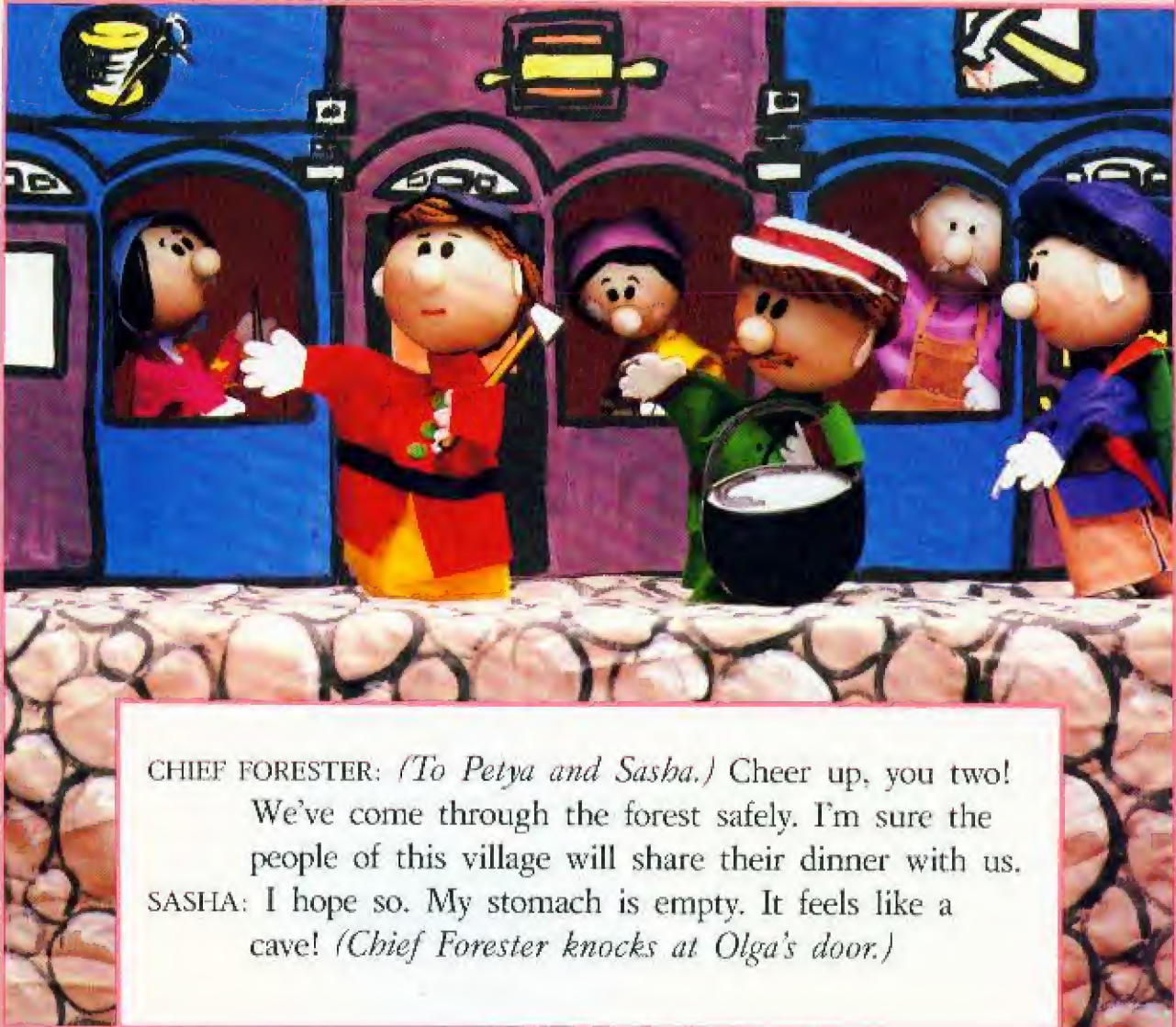
CHIEF FORESTER	VERA, a baker
PETYA, a forester	DMITRI, a carpenter
SASHA, a forester	MARYA
OLGA, a seamstress	OTHER VILLAGERS

Time: Two hundred years ago.

Setting: A village street in old Russia. Three houses stand along the street. Through large windows we see inside each house. There is a carpenter's shop, a bakery, and a seamstress's shop. On the right is a stream with stones.

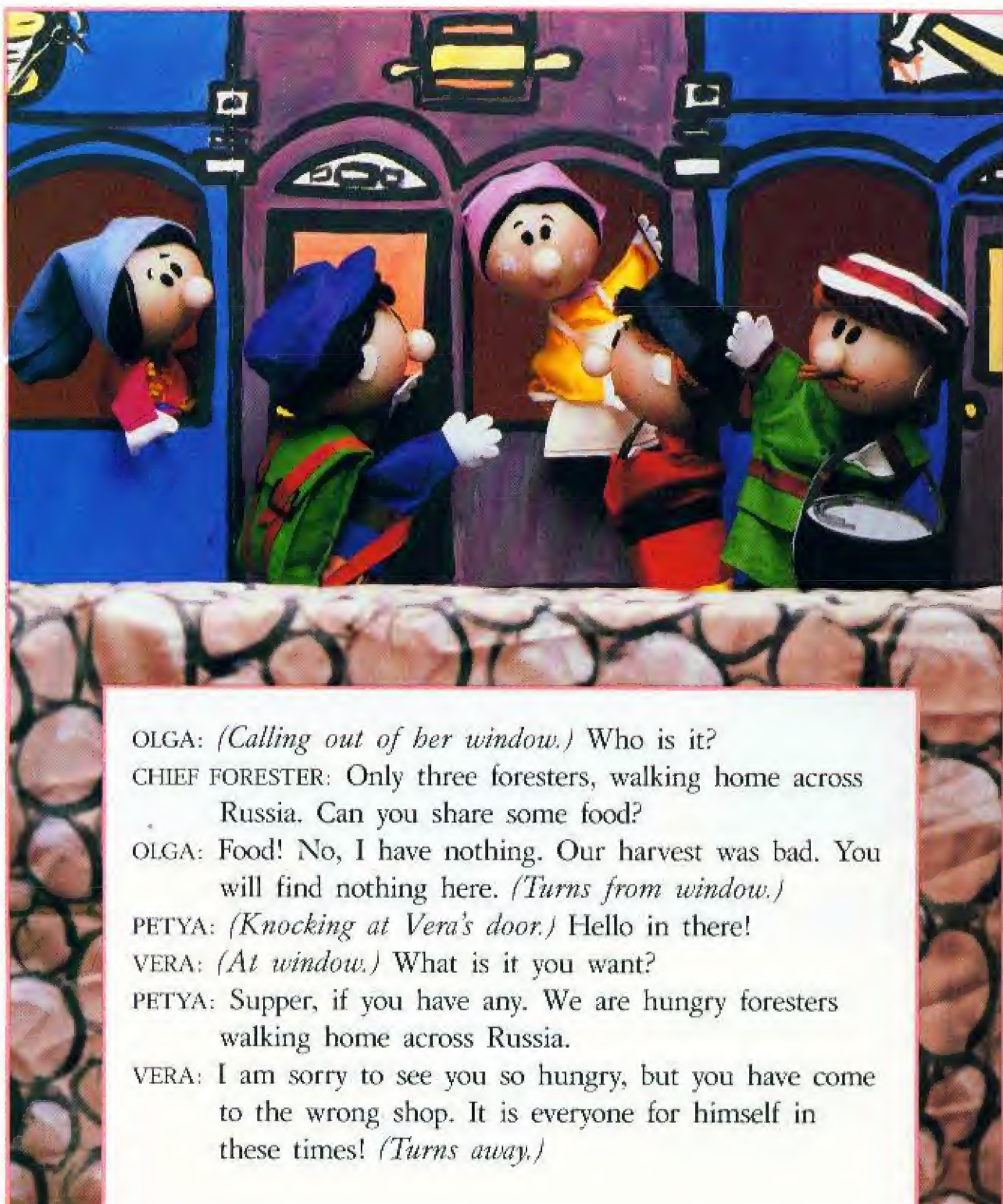
Scene One

Dmitri is at work in the carpenter's shop. Vera works in the bakery kitchen. Olga sits sewing in the seamstress's shop. Three foresters enter and walk down the street. Chief Forester carries an axe. Petya has a knapsack. Sasha carries a large cooking pot.



CHIEF FORESTER: *(To Petya and Sasha.)* Cheer up, you two! We've come through the forest safely. I'm sure the people of this village will share their dinner with us.

SASHA: I hope so. My stomach is empty. It feels like a cave! *(Chief Forester knocks at Olga's door.)*



OLGA: (*Calling out of her window.*) Who is it?

CHIEF FORESTER: Only three foresters, walking home across Russia. Can you share some food?

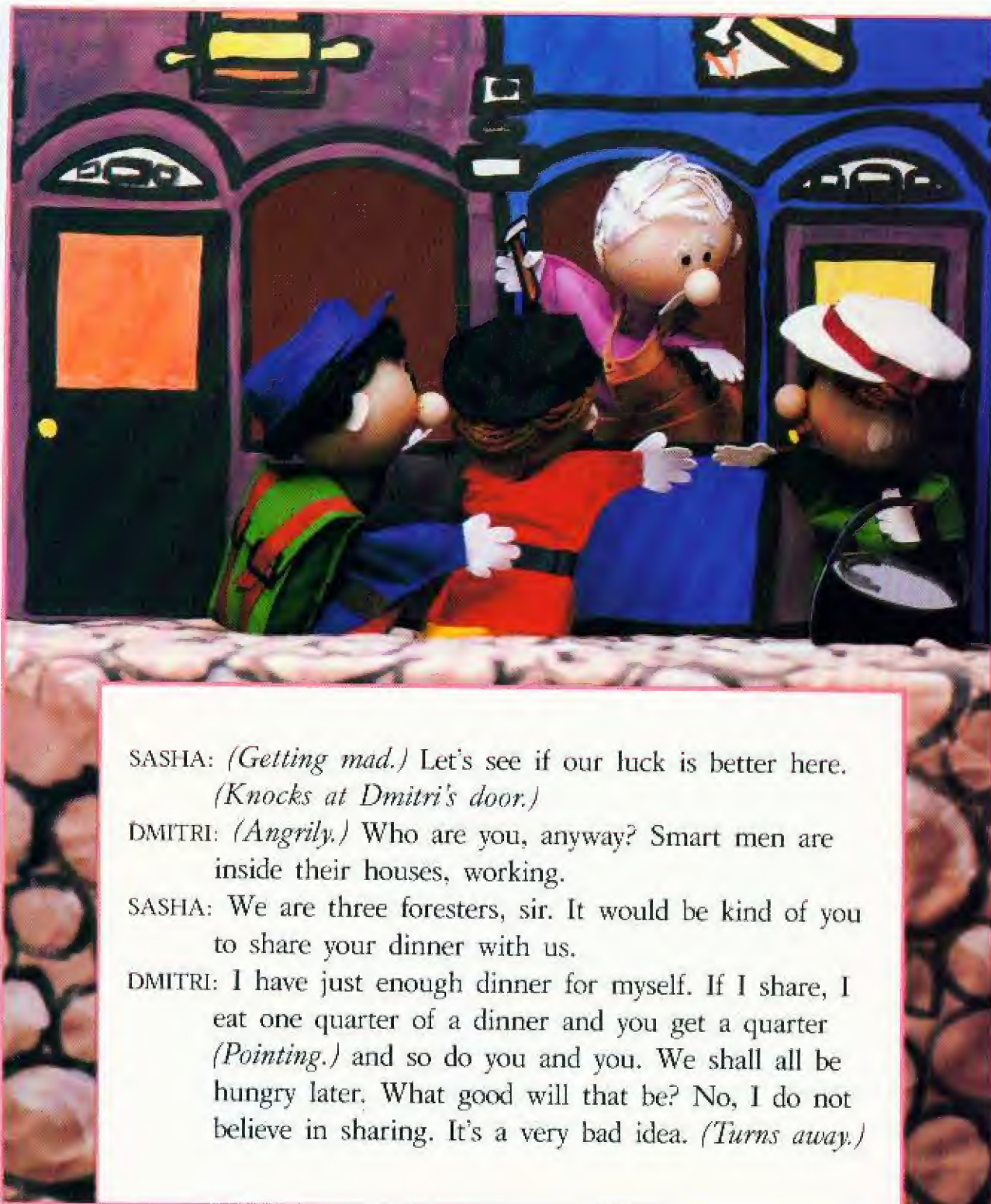
OLGA: Food! No, I have nothing. Our harvest was bad. You will find nothing here. (*Turns from window.*)

PETYA: (*Knocking at Vera's door.*) Hello in there!

VERA: (*At window.*) What is it you want?

PETYA: Supper, if you have any. We are hungry foresters walking home across Russia.

VERA: I am sorry to see you so hungry, but you have come to the wrong shop. It is everyone for himself in these times! (*Turns away.*)



SASHA: *(Getting mad.)* Let's see if our luck is better here.
(Knocks at Dmitri's door.)

DMITRI: *(Angrily.)* Who are you, anyway? Smart men are
inside their houses, working.

SASHA: We are three foresters, sir. It would be kind of you
to share your dinner with us.

DMITRI: I have just enough dinner for myself. If I share, I
eat one quarter of a dinner and you get a quarter
(Pointing.) and so do you and you. We shall all be
hungry later. What good will that be? No, I do not
believe in sharing. It's a very bad idea. *(Turns away.)*

PETYA: What selfish people these are!

SASHA: *(Loudly.)* They do not know how to share!

CHIEF FORESTER: Let's teach them a lesson!

PETYA: No, no! We won't rob anyone.

CHIEF FORESTER: Of course not, Petya. All I meant was to teach these people to make Stone Soup.

SASHA: *(Catching on.)* Ah, Stone Soup!

PETYA: *(Laughing.)* That's just the thing!

Scene Two

The Chief Forester and his companions are in a circle with their heads together, whispering. Dmitri is at the window.

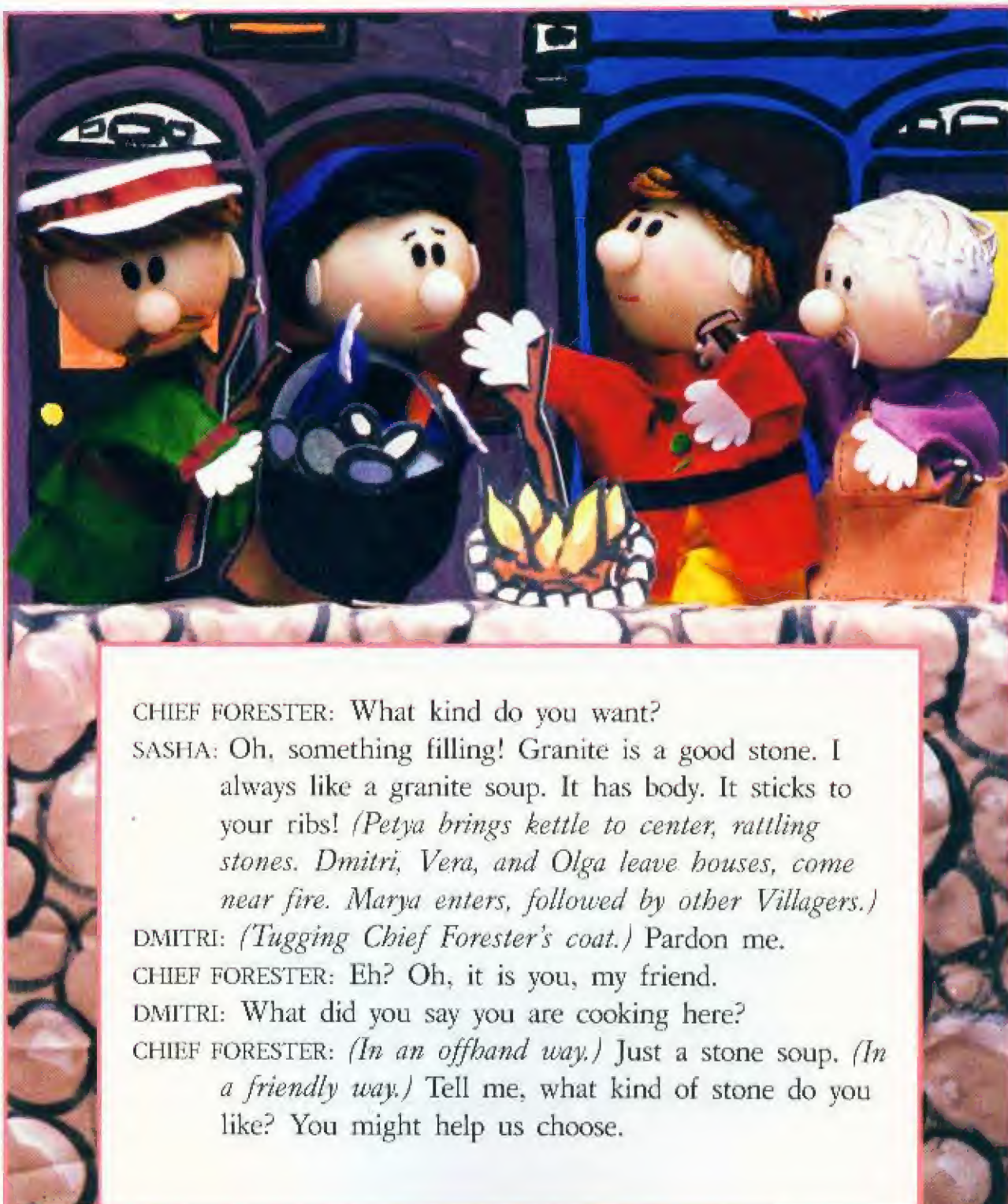
DMITRI: Are you still here? Why aren't you on your way?

CHIEF FORESTER: *(Pretending not to hear.)* Get some wood, Sasha! Get the kettle ready, Petya. We will build our fire here, on this spot. *(Sasha goes off left. Petya finds two Y-shaped sticks on the ground.)*

PETYA: We can use these to hang the kettle on. *(Sets sticks in place.)*

CHIEF FORESTER: Perfect. Now for the stones. We must see if they have tasty stones here. Go and find some in that stream. *(Petya takes kettle to right. He throws some stones loudly into it. Olga and Vera turn and watch him from their windows. Sasha enters with dead branch.)* Good! That will heat our soup quickly.

SASHA: *(Lays fire, pretends to light it.)* What kind of stones will we use for our soup today?



CHIEF FORESTER: What kind do you want?

SASHA: Oh, something filling! Granite is a good stone. I always like a granite soup. It has body. It sticks to your ribs! *(Petya brings kettle to center, rattling stones. Dmitri, Vera, and Olga leave houses, come near fire. Marya enters, followed by other Villagers.)*

DMITRI: *(Tugging Chief Forester's coat.)* Pardon me.

CHIEF FORESTER: Eh? Oh, it is you, my friend.

DMITRI: What did you say you are cooking here?

CHIEF FORESTER: *(In an offhand way.)* Just a stone soup. *(In a friendly way.)* Tell me, what kind of stone do you like? You might help us choose.

DMITRI: I! Why, I never heard of making soup from stones!

SASHA: You never heard of Stone Soup?

PETYA: I don't believe it.

CHIEF FORESTER: *(To Dmitri.)* Come, Sir. If you are not joking, you must eat with us. *(Petya shakes kettle.)* Have you some good stones there, Petya? Let Sasha choose.

SASHA: *(Examining stones.)* Hm-m! This chunky one—it will be good! Washed down from the mountain, it has a flavor of snow on it. Ugh! Throw that one away. A flat stone has a flat taste.

PETYA: How about the red one?

CHIEF FORESTER: No, no, that is only an old fireplace brick. It will taste like smoke. Nothing but fresh stones. We shall have a guest.

SASHA: Fill the kettle, Petya. My fire is ready. *(Petya dips water from well into kettle, bangs kettle over fire.)*

CHIEF FORESTER: *(To Dmitri.)* Have you a spoon? We foresters often make do with a stick. But for a guest, the soup will need proper stirring and tasting.

DMITRI: I have just the thing. It has a nice long handle. It is like new. I have not had guests in five years.

CHIEF FORESTER: *(Clapping him on back.)* Good work, you generous man! *(Dmitri goes inside for spoon.)*

SASHA: *(Smelling the air.)* Oh, it makes me hungry!

DMITRI: *(Returning with spoon.)* Here you are. Please be careful.

CHIEF FORESTER: Sir, you shall be served first. *(Stirs, tastes.)*



OLGA: Is it good?

PETYA: Good!

DMITRI: Good? *(Reaches for spoon.)*

SASHA: *(Keeping spoon away from him.)* Oh, so good!

CHIEF FORESTER: It might stand an onion, though. Onion is very good for pulling the flavor from a stone.

OLGA: You know, I might find an onion in my house.

FIRST VILLAGER: Hurry then, Olga. Get some. *(Olga exits.)*

SASHA: *(Tasting.)* Does it need just a touch of carrot?
(Villagers look at each other.)

VERA: Perhaps I could bring some carrots for this soup.

CHIEF FORESTER: That is kind of you. And will you bring a bowl for yourself as well? You must eat with us.
(Vera goes inside as Olga returns with onions.)

OLGA: Use what you like. I should like to learn to make this soup. *(Chief Forester adds onions, tastes. Petya tastes also.)*



PETYA: Should we add just a bit of potato, perhaps? I cannot say that Stone Soup is ever quite right without a potato or two.

OLGA: That is true. A stone is nothing without a potato! *(Vera returns with carrots and bowl. Chief Forester adds carrots.)*

MARYA: *(To Villagers)* Vera was invited, did you hear? How can we be invited as well? *(They whisper together. Marya calls out.)* If you need some potatoes for that soup of yours, I have a sack in my house! *(Marya appears with sack and gives the sack to Chief Forester.)*

CHIEF FORESTER: Many thanks. Please stay for dinner. And now, Sasha, let's get to business! *(Tasting.)* Add a



potato . . . another . . . another. (*Sasha is already ahead of Chief Forester's count.*) No, stop, Sasha. Stop!

DMITRI: What is the matter?

CHIEF FORESTER: Too many potatoes! The potatoes have soaked up the flavor of the stones.

VILLAGERS: Oh, too bad! What a shame!

MARYA: Is there nothing we can do?

PETYA: I have an idea. Meat and potatoes go well together. Let's add some meat.

DMITRI: I have a ham that will do the job. Wait here. (*Goes inside.*)

CHIEF FORESTER: It might work at that. (*Dmitri returns with ham.*)

SECOND VILLAGER: Good for you, Dmitri!

FIRST VILLAGER: Quick thinking!

ALL: *(Clapping.)* Hurrah, hurrah! *(Chief Forester adds ham.)*

MARYA: Can anyone make this Stone Soup?

PETYA: Oh yes. All you need are stones, fire, water—and hungry people.

CHIEF FORESTER: *(Tasting.)* Hm. Some stones, as you may know, contain salt. These from your brook do not seem to be that kind. *(Olga goes inside.)*

OLGA: *(Returning.)* Here is your salt. *(Chief Forester adds salt, with a big wave of his hand.)*

CHIEF FORESTER: Friends! Your attention, please! I know this will be a very good soup. You have fine stones in this village. Stay and eat with us, one and all. *(Villagers cheer and move about. First Villager goes offstage. She returns at once with bowls. Chief Forester fills them and all taste soup.)*

DMITRI: This is truly a delicious soup, folks! It has a good flavor!

MARYA: It fills you up!

DMITRI: And to think, neighbors, it's made only of stones! *(Foresters now move to stage front. They hold out their bowls of soup.)*

CHIEF FORESTER: *(To audience.)* Yes, think of that! It's made only of stones!

